

Minutes  
Catawba County Board of Commissioners  
Regular Session, Monday, September 17, 2007 7:00 p.m.

Appointments

Criminal Partnership Advisory Board	712	09/17/07
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Legislation

Legislative Update	712	09/17/07
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Proclamations

Commendation to Phyllis Heil, 2007 Intl Whistling Entertainer of the Year	712	09/17/07
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Public Health

Pandemic Flu Update	712	09/17/07
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Sheriff's Department

Deputy Pete Sobotkin – retirement/badge/firearm declared surplus	711	09/17/07
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The Catawba County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, September 17, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. in the 1924 Courthouse, Robert E. Hibbitts Meeting Room, 30 North College Avenue, Newton, North Carolina.

Present were Chair Katherine W. Barnes, Vice-Chair Barbara G. Beatty and Commissioners Dan Hunsucker and Glenn E. Barger.

Commissioner Lynn Lail was absent.

Also present were County Manager J. Thomas Lundy, Assistant County Manager Lee Worsley, County Attorney Debra Bechtel, Deputy County Attorney Anne Marie Pease and County Clerk Barbara Morris.

1. Chair Katherine W. Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
3. Commissioner Dan Hunsucker offered the invocation.
4. Commissioner Glenn E. Barger made a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular and Closed Session Meetings of Tuesday, September 4, 2007. The motion carried unanimously.
5. Recognition of Special Guests: Chair Barnes welcomed Sheriff Huffman, Jerry McCombs of the NAACP and everyone present.
6. Comments for Items not on the Agenda. None.
7. Presentations:
  - a. Chair Barnes asked retiring Sheriff's Deputy Alan Peter Sobotkin as well as Sheriff Huffman to join her at the podium. Chair Barnes first asked the Board to declare Deputy Sobotkin's badge and side arm as surplus and Vice-Chair Barbara G. Beatty made this motion and the motion carried unanimously. Chair Barnes then asked Sheriff Huffman to present Deputy Sobotkin with his badge and sidearm. Deputy Sobotkin was thanked for his 24 years service to Catawba County. At the end of this presentation, Sheriff Huffman advised the Board that the Sheriff's Department had received a grant for the school system – called SOS – Save Our Schools – for surveillance equipment for the Hickory and Newton-Conover school systems.

b. Chair Barnes then presented a Certificate of Commendation to Ms. Phyllis Heil of Hickory, who was named 2007 International Whistling Entertainer of the Year at the International Whistler's Convention in Louisburg, North Carolina, the "Whistling Capital Of The World". Ms. Heil has now won this honor for three consecutive years. She appeared on the Tonight Show with Jay Leno in 2005. Our State magazine recently included her in its "Best of Our State" recognition. The Board's commendation recognized Ms. Heil's dedication to the unique skill of whistling and her commitment to using her gift to bring entertainment and pleasure to hospital patients, civic groups and religious organizations. Ms. Heil entertained all present by whistling "It's a Grand Old Flag".

8. Appointments.

Chair Katherine W. Barnes recommended the reappointed Ronn Abernathy for a third term, Debra Bechtel for a fourth term and Nathan Poovey for a third term to the Catawba County Criminal Partnership Advisory Board. Chair Barnes also recommended the appointment of Vanessa C. Anderson for an unexpired term to succeed Melissa Cline in the Alcohol and Drug Coordinator category on this advisory board. These recommendations came in the form of a motion. The motion carried unanimously.

9. Department Reports.

a. Public Health:

Doug Urland, Public Health Director, came forward to present an update on County's pandemic flu plan and a recent drill held by the Public Health to test procedures for mass dispensing of medications that could be needed in the event of a pandemic flu threat. Prior to his presentation Mr. Urland responded to Chair Barnes questions regarding Mersa and the fact that it is always present and there is no substantial outbreak and Public Health is up to date on the status of Mersa. He then went on to present the pandemic flu update. Public Health's goals were to create a comprehensive and dynamic plan intended to stop, slow or otherwise limit the spread of an influenza pandemic; protect and preserve life; help sustain infrastructure and mitigate the impact of a pandemic flu on the economy; and reduce social disruption. Mr. Urland outlined the phases of pandemic flu recognized by the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the various committees created by Catawba County Public Health to put forward the County's plan. The County's plan was approved by the North Carolina Division of Public Health in March 2007. Mr. Urland also gave the Board updated information on the spread of Avian Influenza (H5N1), and reported on a June 20, 2007 mass dispensing exercise in Catawba County, designed to test the County's plan and ability to dispense medications in a "drive through" format. 270 participants from twelve counties, five State agencies and three Federal agencies took part in the exercise. An evaluator for this exercise stated that, of the seven exercises which took place across North Carolina, Catawba County's exercise was unsurpassed. Mr. Urland said he thought this success was due to the regional participation, the creation of a plan, and the fact that participants acted as citizen/patients and then changed roles and became the healthcare providers so participants saw both sides of the exercise. Also, in an effort to be as "green" as possible, golf carts were used in lieu of idling automobiles.

Chair Barnes asked if there were any outstanding weaknesses identified. Mr. Urland said the "just in time training" was necessary but pre-training was very important and should be sought as much as possible. It was noted that more radios for communications could have improved the exercise.

10. Other Items of Business.

Assistant County Manager Lee Worsley came forward to give the Board an update on the session of the North Carolina General Assembly that ended in August, and on progress toward the Board's State Legislative Goals for 2006-2007 and 2007-2008. He noted it was a very good year for county government. He reported on State funding appropriated for the Hickory Metro Higher Education Center, the Engineering Center and the Hosiery Technology Center. He discussed the General Assembly's action to relieve counties of Medicaid funding and the impact on Catawba County, given that the State is also taking back sales tax and some school funding; the General Assembly's decision to provide local options for additional revenues from either a quarter cent sales tax or land transfer tax, pending voter approval, which led to the Board's call for a referendum on a one quarter cent sales tax on November 6th. Other goals that were accomplished included child care subsidies funding, additional state aid to libraries, the failure of a bill which would have authorized non-

emergency transport by private providers, funding of E911 emergency telephone services and use of fees collected, the builders inventory bill was not reintroduced, electronic waste recycling and taxation (Chair Barnes asked if this expanded to televisions and it was unknown at that time but would be investigated) and clarification of industrial machinery from building inspection. Of major importance was the positive legislation regarding interbasin transfers and the increased income threshold and the exclusion amount change for the Homestead exemption criteria. Additionally, the Force Account Bill passage resulted in projected savings in the \$860,000 within the Solid Waste Fund. Mr. Worsley also discussed some goals that were not accomplished (one specifically was the refund of state portion of sales tax on school purchases and the way Wake County handled this was to deed the schools to the County and they could then get the refund and Dr. Markley had asked the County to consider this strategy) and legislation the Board may wish to monitor during the 2008 session of the General Assembly.

Commissioner Barger asked Mr. Worsley about a possible requirement for changing voting machines. Mr. Worsley replied that it was Federal legislation and reminded the Board of last year's state legislation which forced the county to replace its voting machines. The new machines purchased were in anticipation of this new Federal bill and the only county machines that would be affected if the bill passed would be the touch screen machines which are currently used in the one-stop sites. Commissioner Hunsucker asked about the voter registration at the one-stop sites –and how fraud was going to be prevented. Mr. Worsley replied that it was a challenge and the state was considering an electronic system at these sites that would verify voters in real time and he guessed the ballots for these people would be provisional until they were verified by the Board of Elections.

County Manager Lundy complimented and thanked Mr. Worsley for taking over legislative responsibility half way through the session and noted he got up to speed very quickly and had an incredible grasp of the details of different bills. Mr. Lundy said he had done a great job. Chair Barnes joined in with her appreciation for Mr. Worsley's efforts.

Mr. Lundy then went on to say that the Board should be congratulated for reaching so many goals and noted it was due in large part to the contacts the Commissioners had made. Chair Barnes commented that the legislators who were key in the interbasin transfer issue were recognized at Riverfest and these legislators noted that the County Commissioners presence and persistence played a large role in addressing the issue. Vice-Chair Beatty added that citizen support also was a big part in the success of the effort.

11. Attorneys' Report. None.
12. Manager's Report. None.
13. Vice-Chair Beatty made a motion to adjourn at 8:20 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

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Katherine W. Barnes, Chair  
Board of Commissioners

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Barbara E. Morris, County Clerk